

# Chippewa National Forest



## 2013 Annual Report



# Notes from the Forest Supervisor



*Forest Supervisor  
Darla Lenz*

This annual report includes a story about the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Chippewa National Forest (CNF) and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO). The signing of this MOU represents a significant step in the government to government relationship between the CNF and the LLBO. The CNF and the LLBO share a complicated history. Approximately 90% of the Leech Lake Reservation lies within the exterior CNF boundaries and part of the CNF was created from Reservation lands through acts of Congress. The LLBO retained treaty rights related to hunting, fishing, gathering, and other activities in this area and has jurisdictional authority to regulate tribal activities within the Reservation.

The CNF has “federal trust responsibility” to protect tribal assets, resources, and rights in its land management activities. Trust responsibility is a legal concept which has become solidified in law and policy. I believe our recently signed MOU continues our progress in fulfilling our trust responsibility and I am very proud to have been part of this achievement in 2013.

## New Walker Ranger Station

CNF Supervisor Darla Lenz officially welcomed the community to the new Walker Ranger District Office with a ribbon cutting ceremony on March 5<sup>th</sup>. This new Ranger Station compound includes a 9,300 square foot two-story District office with an attached heated warehouse, an unheated garage, and crew quarters. Demolition, limited utility connections, and landscaping were completed in October 2013.



The Forest was honored to have several special guest speakers at the Open House ceremony, including Walker Mayor Scott Bruns, Cass County Commissioner Jim Dowson and representatives from Senator Amy Klobuchar’s office, Representative Rick Nolan and Representative Collin Peterson’s offices.

District Ranger Sherry Fountain thanked the Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce for their assistance with the event and in their support with the new partnership. Visitors had a chance to meet Ranger Fountain and tour the new office, which was built following Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system. Forest visitors will have a chance to enjoy native plant landscaping surrounding the new building that is also a part of LEED.

The next step at the new office will be the construction of a short bike trail link that connects the trailhead and parking area at the District Office through the tunnel under the Highway 371/200 to the Shingobee Connection Trail. The trail connects downtown Walker to Brainerd. Trail work is planned for spring 2014. Visitors are welcome to stop by the new office, which is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

# Leech Lake Band Agreement Signed



## ***Chippewa National Forest and Leech Lake Band Memorandum of Understanding***

On June 6, 2013, the passage of Tribal Resolution #2013-118 authorized and approved a bi-lateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the CNF. The new MOU expresses the will of the CNF and the Band to work together to conserve resources significant to the Band's way of life and cultural identity.

The CNF is one for the few forests that manage lands within the boundaries of an existing Indian Reservation. The MOU sets the stage for the CNF and LLBO to address issues of mutual concern or interest. Provisions within the MOU affirm the Federal Government's Trust Responsibilities and broadly defines a consultation framework and decision making process. Natural resource management; economic development and employment; training and education; maintaining Ojibwe cultural life-ways; and regulatory jurisdiction are some of the ways we will work together to benefit current and future generations.

## **Forest Accomplishments**

### **Timber**

Harvested (thousand board feet) 49,132  
Reforestation (Acres) 3,840  
Timber Stand Improvement (Acres) 1,468  
Fuelwood Permits 222  
Christmas Tree Permits 170  
Bough Permits 35

### **Fire and Fuels**

Prescribed Burns 6 fires/2,812 acres  
Wildfires Extinguished 23 fires/21 acres  
Hazardous Fuels Reduced (acres) 2,686  
Hazardous Fuels Reduced (\*non-WFHF acres)  
5,900 \*non Wildland Fire related

### **Roads and Trails**

Passenger Car Road Maintained 308 miles  
High Clearance Road Maintained 69 miles  
Trails Maintained to Standard 192 miles

### **Wildlife**

Habitat Restoration 6,870 acres  
Streams Enhanced 35 miles  
Lakes Enhanced 750 acres  
Soil Resource Improvement 200 acres

### **Lands**

Special Use Permits 638  
Land Acquisition 1.3 acres  
Mineral Permits Issues 26  
Boundary Management 15 miles



# Forest Management & Restoration

In July 2012, a windstorm swept through the heart of the CNF. Over 108,000 acres of forest was damaged by the windstorm, including red pine stands, campground facilities and recreation special use cabins and resorts.

CNF employees responded immediately after the storm to safety-related issues. Campgrounds were evacuated and Forest crews and contractors cleared fallen trees off roads and out of recreation sites. Short and long-term forest management plans were developed and put into action.

The second tier of the CNF response was to salvage trees of high monetary value that had been damaged by the storm. Those trees included some of the pines and hardwoods that were severely damaged—lying on the ground or bent and twisted by the storm. Environmental analysis was completed and logging contracts were awarded. Over the course of eight months, loggers salvaged thousands of cords of timber of over hundreds of acres.

The third tier of forest management response to the windstorm was to address forest restoration across approximately 20,000 acres of moderate to severe blowdown areas. The Restoration Environmental Analysis was completed in July 2013. The following purposes of the forest restoration were identified in the associated Decision Notice:

- Restore conditions to be more representative of native vegetation communities, natural process and productive forests.
- Reduce hazardous fuels (downed trees) to reduce the potential of destructive fires that pose a risk to life and property adjacent to residential areas and along transportation corridors.
- Salvage the storm-damaged trees and provide for commercial wood for mills in support of the local and regional economy.
- Manage treatments in areas of interest to maintain or enhance traditional Tribal and community uses.

The CNF continues to implement forest management that addresses both the windstorm effects and on-going forest management. Projects include reduction of fire fuels, site preparation for tree regeneration, prescribed burning, biomass utilization and seedling planting.

Additional information on forest management, including response to the windstorm, is available at [www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa](http://www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa). Visitors are invited to view the 2012 Windstorm interpretive display at the Norway Beach Visitor Center near Cass Lake this summer.





# Wolf at West Winnie

Prior to August 2013, there had been no documented wolf attacks in Minnesota (or in the lower 48 United States). On August 24, a wolf approached and bit a camper at the West Winnie Campground on the CNF. The teenager needed stitches from the bite, but was not seriously injured.



Campers at West Winnie had seen the wolf prior to the attack. It had acted aggressively toward other campers, entering tents and campsites and getting into food. In the middle of the night, the wolf approached two teens sitting outside their tents. The animal came up behind the camper and bit him on the head.

US Forest Service, Minnesota DNR and Leech Lake Tribal Conservation officers all responded to the incident, and worked to move campers safely out of the area. Officers closed the campground because of concerns over the aggressive behavior of the animal.

Federal and State trappers were brought in and a young male wolf was captured Monday morning, August 26. The wolf carcass was sent to the University of Minnesota for a necropsy. The animal tested negative for rabies and DNA testing showed the wolf trapped was the wolf that attacked the teenager. Abnormalities in the animal's jaw may have led to the wolf's aggressive behavior as it searched for food. Trappers remained in place at West Winnie through August 28th to ensure no other wolves were in the area. They did not catch any other animals.

The attack story appeared in many national news outlets. The MN DNR handled the media response to this incident and answered thousands of questions about this unusual wolf encounter. The West Winnie campground was reopened August 28 and campers returned to once again enjoy the campground, forest and lakes.

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## Unique Year For Forest Recreation!

The wolf incident at West Winnie campground was just a part of the unusual year in the Forest recreation program. In 2012, South Pike Bay and Norway Beach campgrounds closed due to a windstorm, and recreation staff had a long task list to get those campgrounds reopened in 2013. Opening campgrounds would normally have begun in May 2013, but a late season snowfall with two feet of snow delayed campground openings until Memorial Day. The late opening brought a 20% reduction in campground receipts in 2013.

Over 180 volunteers helped with Forest projects, including trail maintenance campground hosting and restoration projects. HistoriCorps, Student Conservation Association, Youth Conservation Corps students and 14 Senior Employees keep the Forest running!

## For More Information...

Learn more about the CNF by logging in to the Forest website at [www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa](http://www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa). Our website has links to campground information and reservations, Forest NEPA projects and Visitor Center schedules ! Follow us on twitter [@ChippewaNF](https://twitter.com/ChippewaNF)

New Forest maps are available for \$10.00 at any CNF office. USGS Quad maps (\$8.00) and the Motor Vehicle Use Maps (free) are also available.

- **Forest Supervisor's Office** 218-335-8600
- **Blackduck Ranger Station** 218-835-4291
- **Deer River Ranger Station** 218-246-2123
- **Walker Ranger Station** 218-547-1044
- **Norway Beach Visitor Center** 218-335-3076
- **Cut Foot Sioux Visitor Center** 218-246-8233
- **Marcell Discovery Center** 218-836-3161



## US Capitol Christmas Tree in 2014!



The winter season may extend in 2014 as the Forest prepares to send the US Capitol Christmas Tree to Washington DC in December! The CNF provided the tree in 1992 and again has the honor this year. Forest field personnel will find the perfect 70-foot spruce or balsam fir to represent the state of Minnesota. The CNF will partner with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, area communities and sponsors like Choose Outdoors to bring the tree to the front lawn of the US Capitol building.

Along with transporting the big tree, the Forest and partners will also send 50-70 smaller trees and 10,000 ornaments made from people across the state. Watch for US Capitol Christmas Tree events in your community!